

Best practices for effective designs  
in election administration

Section 4: Full-face DRE ballots

Draft: May 2007

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## Full-face DRE ballots

The general election ballot prototypes shown on the following pages are based on Voluntary Voting System Best practices (VVSG). The content organization and presentation are based on usability testing and information design principles. These best practices, principles, and tests lead to the following key criteria and goals:

- Design for all voters: Emphasize voter needs over administrative and vendor requirements.
- Use clear, concise language (simple language) for all content.
- Use color functionally and exclusively for instructions
- Use illustrative diagrams that accurately reflect the ballot type and equipment to further clarify instructions and processes.
- Use upper and lower case sans serif type, set at a minimum of 12 points for all ballot content voters will read. Given a choice between adequate type size (12 points) and fewer pages, ballots with 12 point type and more pages were found to be more usable than those with fewer pages and smaller type.
- One language per ballot is recommended. To meet usability standards, display no more than two languages.

Other recommendations are listed in the Design and Samples sections (pages XXX–XXX).

Prototype ballots shown on the following pages are not endorsements of a particular ballot manufacturer. They are used to illustrate design standards and usability findings. These component-based design standards can be applied to a variety of ballot types.

### **Digital files and downloads**

Electronic versions of these files are available at:  
[www.eac.gov/directory\\_name](http://www.eac.gov/directory_name)

The files are provided in two formats: Acrobat (.pdf) and InDesign (.indd).

Note: The use of any specific product is not an endorsement of that product. The design standards illustrated throughout this document do not rely on specific software or products. For copyright reasons, EAC cannot supply you with the fonts used in the InDesign files. They are from the Univers family and are available from numerous suppliers.

### **Research findings**

Detailed findings that support the ballot design best practices can be found in Section 7 of this document, and at [www.eac.gov/directory\\_name](http://www.eac.gov/directory_name)

**Section organization**

This section has three sections: (1) planning, (2) ballot design best practices, and (3) samples.

**Planning**

The Planning section (page XXX) outlines how to incorporate resources into your ballot development and production process; in what areas those resources may be of assistance; and when those activities should occur. It offers tips on possible challenges and opportunities.

**Design**

Prototypes are illustrated in full and by component. The production specifications for those components are detailed, and items of note are under the discussion heading.

*Components*

A ballot has four basic content areas:

- A** Election information (e.g. jurisdiction, general election and date)
- B** Ballot instructions
- C** Ballot navigation, including page numbers and reminders to vote on the other side or go on to the next page
- D** Questions, including contests, retentions and referendum

Each of these components is illustrated at its actual size, and production specifications are detailed on the facing page. Specifications are numbered from **1** through **6**

*Specifications*

All production specifications—including type face, type size, leading, line weights, background tint fills, and distances between elements—are included. These specifications allow information designers to build best practice ballots.

*Discussion*

Nonspecification notes, comments and references such as production best practices and legislative requirements may be listed under this heading.

**Samples**

In the Samples section (page XXX) the design best practices and components are applied to a two-color ballot and a one-color version.

## Planning process

The planning table on the following page outlines additional resources and steps that can be taken to ensure that ballot content and design best serve the voter.

These recommendations are based on the best practices in Cook County, Illinois, and Design for Democracy's pilot test in Nebraska.

### Planning goals

These additional resources can help ensure that

- Content is easily understood by all voters, including those with low vision and literacy issues.
- The visual organization and presentation of the content supports ease of use and confidence in the process.
- Any necessary translations are accurate and sensitive to cultural differences in language and expression.

### Planning value by role/resource

- *Simple language expert* ensures that instructions and other ballot content are written in the most effective manner to help all voters (not just low-literacy voters) understand and follow instructions, and feel confident that they have properly cast their ballots.
- *Information designer* organizes the ballot content—text, graphics, illustrations—in a manner that is clear, simple, and functional, and that supports and enhances the voter's comprehension of the content and voting process. (Note: The design field is very broad; it is important to work with a designer who has expertise in the organization and presentation of complex information.)
- *Usability expert* works with the information designer to develop review, testing, and revision processes that improve the ballot's overall effectiveness, accuracy, and usability.
- *Translator* ensures proper grammatical, syntactic, and structural character of the content, and appropriate use of local dialect variations. Accurate translations are vital for non-English-speaking voters, and online translations are often misleading, unclear, or simply wrong. The EAC can provide some model translations.
- *Cultural expert* reviews translated material to ensure that the translations are accurate and culturally relevant, and that their visual presentation is appropriate.

**Before election cycle**

<i>Resources</i>	<i>Planning, design, and usability activities</i>	<i>Tips</i>
<b>Election Official</b>	<p>Use current election to establish baseline for future work you are planning. Get voter feedback before starting not just afterwards. (EAC can provide a revised satisfaction survey.)</p> <p>Establish an approval process/team. Determine who must sign off on improvements at each phase.</p>	
<b>Election Official</b>	<p>Choose an objective, professional resource to take ownership of information design challenges.</p> <p>Simultaneously hire a designer and a usability professional who can offer additional feedback.</p> <p>Partner with a policy advisor who can help guide design improvements through the necessary legislative processes.</p>	<p>Whenever possible, hire a local person who will be able to meet with you and your extended production team (vendors, printers, etc.).</p> <p>Provide the designer with poll worker training, as well as any feedback from voters or poll workers.</p> <p>Provide the designer with a complete list of current election documents and legal requirements.</p>
<b>Designer and Usability Expert</b>	<p>Review and become familiar with election design standards and recommendations.</p> <p>Understand variance between EAC best practices and local requirements for poll worker and voter materials.</p>	
<b>Election Official</b>	<p>Estimate value of design improvements.</p> <p>Gauge impact of the redesign process during the next election planning cycle.</p>	

**During election cycle**

<i>Resources</i>	<i>Content development activities</i>	<i>Tips</i>
<b>Simple Language Expert</b>	Edit final English-language content for low-literacy voters.	<p>The EAC has some translations that can be leveraged and modified, but you will need expert assistance on referendum.</p> <p>Understand the translator's requirements before the election: data formats, time line, etc.</p> <p>Have a third-party expert review the translated materials after the initial draft. Legal may need to review the materials after simple language and design have been incorporated.</p>
<b>Translator</b>	Translate content for non-English-speaking voters.	
<b>Alternative language/cultural expert</b>	Review translated content in each alternative language for cultural relevancy.	Translation services may not be aware of possible cultural sensitivities of translated material.
<b>Designer</b>	Election official provides designer with final content for different materials, in English and other languages, after they have been reviewed by simple language and cultural experts.	

## Design

On pages XXX–XXX design best practices for a general election one-language ballot are illustrated and their production specifications detailed. These best practices are based on are based on VVSG.

### Components

- A** A ballot has four basic content areas:  
Election information (e.g., jurisdiction, general election, date)
- B** Ballot instructions
- C** Ballot navigation, including page numbers and reminders to vote on the other side or go on to the next page
- D** Questions, including contests, retentions, and referendum

Each of those components is illustrated at its full size, and production specifications are detailed on the facing page. Specifications are numbered from

**1** through **6**

### Specifications

All production specifications—including type face, type size, leading, line weights, tint fills, and distances between elements—are included. These specifications allow information designers to build best practices ballots.

### Discussion

Nonspecification notes, comments, and references, such as production best practices and legislative requirements, may be listed under this heading.

Prototype ballots shown on the following pages are not endorsements of a particular ballot manufacturer. They are used to illustrate design standards and usability findings. These component-based design standards can be applied to a variety of ballot types.

### Research findings

Additional research findings that further support the following ballot design best practices can be found in the Research section and at [www.eac.gov/directory\\_name](http://www.eac.gov/directory_name).

[illegible]

15% actual size

Cast Vote Button

Cast Vote Button

1

**Official Ballot for General Election  
Springfield County, Nebraska  
Tuesday, November 07, 2006**

75% actual size

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Election information specifications

Information defining the specifics of the election should be placed above the left column of the face of every ballot page outside the area used by the voter and the scanner. Content should include the statement “Official Ballot,” along with election type, location, and date. Local laws may require that additional information be included.

1 Information

On ballots with space constraints, election information may be set at a minimum size. For ballots with more available space, larger type is encouraged.

*Minimum size type for all:* Univers 65 Bold, size 18 pt., leading 20 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

*Maximum size type for title:* Univers 65 Bold, size 36 pt., leading 40 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

*Maximum size type for location and date:* Univers 65 Bold, size 30 pt., leading 34 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

Discussion

Although this is important content, it should not be set so large that it affects the amount of room left for instructions and ballot content actually used by the voter.

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1

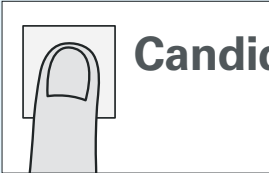
Instructions

2

3

4

How to vote

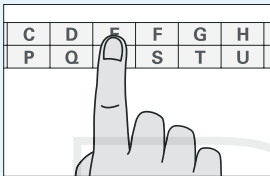


**Candidate**

To vote, touch the button next to a name. A green "X" will appear.  
To undo your choice, touch the button again. It will disappear.

5

How to write in a name



To write in a name, touch the button next to "write-in." A blinking "X" will appear. Type in a name with the keyboard directly below the screen. Touch the arrow keys to move forward and backward as you write. When you are finished, touch the Enter Button.  
To undo your write-in, touch the button next to "write-in" again. The "X" will disappear.

Casting your vote



To cast your vote, press the Cast Vote Button.



**Make sure you are finished voting before you press the Cast Vote Button.**

all 50% actual size

### Ballot instruction specifications

Specifications for each instruction element are referenced by number below.

#### 1 Main head

This header defines the complete instructions area for the voter.

*Fill:* 100% process cyan, 0.75" height, extends full width of the instructions area.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% white, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

#### 2 Background fill

4.5 pt. white line between background tint and main head. 4.5 pt. white line between each instruction.

*Fill:* 10% process cyan, extends full width of the column and 0.2" above all instructions and 0.2" below the longest instruction.

#### 3 Subhead

Begins 0.2" below top of fill.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill.

#### 4 Illustration

Begins 0.2" below bottom of title.

*Size:* 0.2" inset from column width on both sides; height determined by most effective display of illustration (typically 1.5" to 3").

*Stroke:* 0.75 pt. line, 100% black.

#### 5 Instruction text

Begins 0.2" from the right edge of illustration.

*Type:* Univers 45 Light, size 14 pt., leading 17 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill.

#### 6 Alerts

These should be used only for critical instructions, such as actions that may invalidate a voter's ballot. Begins 0.2" below baseline of instruction content.

*Attention icon:* 0.375" diameter, 100% process cyan, set 0.2" from right edge of illustration.

*Type:* Univers 45 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 17 pt., tracking -20, 100% process cyan, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of illustration and 0.2" below Attention icon.

### Discussion

The decision to apply color only to instructions is the result of feedback from usability testing and literacy experts.

Illustrative diagrams that accurately reflect the ballot type and equipment further clarify instructions and processes.

These illustrations are available at [www.eac.gov/directory\\_name](http://www.eac.gov/directory_name).

Informational icons are used to draw attention to unique or important areas of the ballot or to improve the voter's ability to scan dense information.

Political party icons are not encouraged as literacy experts and design professionals believe they simply confuse many voters.

1

2

**Thank you for voting!**  
**Press the Cast Vote Button to cast your vote.**

3



**Make sure you are finished voting**  
**before you press the Cast Vote Button.**



4

5

**National Contests**

### Ballot navigation specifications

Specifications for each instruction element are referenced by number below.

#### 1 Instruction fill

Navigational instructions should be placed at the end of the final column, to tell the voter on what to do next.

*Fill:* 10% process cyan, extends full width of the column and 0.2" above and below all content.

#### 2 Instruction content

Begins 0.2" below top of fill.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

#### 3 Alerts

These should be employed only for critical instructions, such as actions which may invalidate a voter's ballot. Begins 0.2" below baseline of instruction content.

*Attention icon:* 0.375" diameter, 100% process cyan, set 0.2" from left edge of fill.

*Type:* Univers 45 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% process cyan, left aligned, set 0.2" below instruction content and 0.2" below Attention icon.

#### 4 Cast Vote arrow

Use the Cast Vote arrow to designate the location of the Cast Vote Button below the ballot.

*Cast Vote arrow icon:* 1.5" diameter, 100% black, set 1.0" above the bottom edge of the ballot, directly above the Cast Vote Button.

#### 5 Contest head

This header defines each separate contest area for the voter; it begins at the top of the column.

*Fill:* 100% black, extends full width of the contest area, using multiple columns if necessary, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% white, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

### Discussion

These ballot navigation guides help indicate important steps.

Informational icons such as arrows and exclamation points can be used to draw attention to unique or important areas of the ballot, or to improve the voter's ability to scan dense information.

These informational icons are available at [www.eac.gov/directory\\_name](http://www.eac.gov/directory_name).

The decision to apply color only to instructions is the result of feedback from usability testing and literacy experts.

1

2

3

U.S. Senator

Vote for 1

☐ Dennis Weiford  
Blue

☐ Lloyd Garriss  
Yellow

☐ Sylvia Wentworth  
Purple

☐ John Hewetson  
Orange

☐ Victor Martinez  
Pink

☐ Heather Portier  
Gold

☐ or write-in:  
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U.S. Senator

Vote for 1

☐ Dennis Weiford  
Blue

☐ Lloyd Garriss  
Yellow

☐ Sylvia Wentworth  
Purple

☐ John Hewetson  
Orange

☐ Victor Martinez  
Pink

☐ Heather Portier  
Gold

☐ or write-in:  
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U.S. Representative

Vote for 1

☐ Brad Plunkard  
Blue

☐ Bruce Reeder  
Yellow

☐ Brad Schott  
Purple

☐ Glen Tawney  
Orange

☐ Carroll Forrest  
Pink

☐ or write-in:  
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Board of Education Member:  
City of Springfield

!Vote for up to 5

☐ Alex Marr

☐ Albert Musgrove

☐ Thomas Fleming

☐ Harriett Watson

☐ Theodore Fina

☐ Steven Williams

☐ Peter Sigelakis

☐ Deborah Barkelow

☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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all 75% actual size

**Contest question specifications**

Contest question components include borders that separate contests, titles, special instructions, candidate/ticket information, and choices.

**1 Border**

This border defines the top, left, and bottom sides of the contest component.

*Top line:* 4.5 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of the column.

*Left line:* 1.5 pt. line, 100% black.

*Bottom line:* 1.5 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of the column; placed 0.2" below last content in column.

**2 Contest title**

This header defines each contest question; it begins directly below the top border.

*Fill:* 15% black, extends full width of the column, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

**3 Contest instructions**

This area defines each contest's instructions; it begins directly below the header.

*Fill:* 10% process cyan, extends full width of the column, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

**4 Special instructions**

When new or modified instructions are introduced, they should be called out to alert the voter. These are set identically to standard contest instructions, with the addition of an Attention icon.

*Fill:* 10% process cyan, extends full width of the column, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Attention icon:* 0.375" diameter, 100% process cyan, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of icon, centered between top and bottom of fill.

5

6

7

U.S. Senator

Vote for 1

☐ Dennis Weiford  
Blue

☐ Lloyd Garriss  
Yellow

☐ Sylvia Wentworth  
Purple

☐ John Hewetson  
Orange

☐ Victor Martinez  
Pink

☐ Heather Portier  
Gold

☐ or write-in:  
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U.S. Senator

Vote for 1

☐ Dennis Weiford  
Blue

☐ Lloyd Garriss  
Yellow

☐ Sylvia Wentworth  
Purple

☐ John Hewetson  
Orange

☐ Victor Martinez  
Pink

☐ Heather Portier  
Gold

☐ or write-in:  
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U.S. Representative

Vote for 1

☐ Brad Plunkard  
Blue

☐ Bruce Reeder  
Yellow

☐ Brad Schott  
Purple

☐ Glen Tawney  
Orange

☐ Carroll Forrest  
Pink

☐ or write-in:  
-----

Board of Education Member:  
City of Springfield

!Vote for up to 5

☐ Alex Marr

☐ Albert Musgrove

☐ Thomas Fleming

☐ Harriett Watson

☐ Theodore Fina

☐ Steven Williams

☐ Peter Sigelakis

☐ Deborah Barkelow

☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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☐ or write-in:  
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all 75% actual size



**Contest question specifications, continued****5 Candidate information**

First name begins 0.2" below bottom of instructions fill; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater. Subsequent names should begin 0.2" below separation line of previous candidate. Names should be set as close as possible to the selection location.

*Name type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

*Party type:* Univers 45 Light, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

On contests with a two-person ticket, the word "and" should be placed alone on a separate line between the two candidate names.

**6 Separation line**

Each candidate option should be followed by a line to clearly define it, even if it is the final option in a particular contest. Line should be placed no less than 0.2" below the bottom of candidate information; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater. Line should also be located 0.2" above top of following candidate name, if applicable.

*Line:* 0.375 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of column area allowed for candidates.

**7 Write-in**

Begins 0.2" below final line of previous candidate. Write-in line should be placed no less than 0.3" below baseline of type; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

*Write-in line:* 0.75 pt. line, dashed 4 pt./4 pt., 100% black, extends full width of column area allowed for candidates.

**Discussion**

All candidates in any given contest should be given the same amount of vertical space. If a candidate's name must break onto a second line, the vertical space for all candidates should be changed to match.

Place the selection square to the left of the candidate/ticket name as shown on page XXX.

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Judge Retention:  
State Supreme Court

Vote to keep or remove

Keep **Elmer Hull**  
as Associate Justice of the  
State Supreme Court?

☐

Keep Judge

☐

Remove Judge

Judge Retention:  
State Court of Appeals

Vote to keep or remove

Keep **Susan Esquer**  
as Associate Justice of the  
State Court of Appeals,  
5th Appellate District, Division  
2?

☐

Keep Judge

☐

Remove Judge

75% actual size

### Retention question specifications

Retention questions include borders that separate each question, titles, special instructions, the question, and the choices.

#### 1 Border

This border defines the top, left, and bottom sides of the question.

*Top:* 3.0 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of the column.

*Left:* 1.5 pt. line, 100% black.

*Bottom:* 1.5 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of the column; placed 0.2" below last content in column.

#### 2 Retention title

This header defines each retention question; it begins directly below the top border.

*Fill:* 15% black, extends full width of the column, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

3

#### Retention instructions

This area defines each question's instructions; it begins directly below the header.

*Fill:* 10% process cyan, extends full width of the column, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

4

#### Retention content

Presents the retention question clearly to the voter; the judge's name should be bold to add emphasis. Begins 0.2" below bottom of instructions fill.

*Content type:* Univers 45 Light, size 14 pt., leading 17 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

*Name type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 17 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

#### Retention selection options

First selection option should begin 0.2" below baseline of content; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater. Subsequent options should begin 0.2" below final line of the previous option. Options should be set as close as possible to the selection location.

- 5 Option type: Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

#### Separation line

Each selection option should be followed by a line to clearly define it, even if it is the final option in a particular question. Line should be placed 0.2" below baseline of selection option; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater. Line should also be located 0.2" above top of following option, if applicable.

6

*Line:* 0.375 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of column area allowed for selection options.

#### Discussion

The decision to apply color only to instructions is the result of feedback from usability testing and literacy experts.

All names in any given retention question should be given the same amount of vertical space. If a candidate's name must break onto a second line, the vertical space for all candidates should be changed to match.

Place the selection square to the left of the judge's name as shown on page XXX.

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**Ballot Measure 106: Limits on Private Enforcement of Unfair Business Competition Laws**

**Vote to accept or reject**

Allows individual or class action “unfair business” lawsuits only if actual loss suffered; only government officials may enforce these laws on public’s behalf. Fiscal Impact: Unknown state fiscal impact depending on whether the measure increases or decreases court workload and the extent to which diverted funds are replaced. Unknown potential costs to local governments, depending on the extent to which diverted funds are replaced.”

☐ **Accept**

☐ **Reject**

**Ballot Measure 111: Revenue Bonds for Renovation of Madison County Jail Facilities**

**Vote to accept or reject**

Directs the Madison County Public Safety Authority, a building authority incorporated by Madison County and the City of Ijamsville pursuant to Section 346.27 of the State Code, for the purpose of acquiring, destroying, demolishing, improving, enlarging, equipping, furnishing, repairing, maintaining and operating one or more public buildings for the joint use of the County, the City or any school district which is part of the County, to issue its revenue bonds in an amount not exceeding \$29,700,000 for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, furnishing, equipping, renovating and expanding existing jail facilities for the joint use of the County and the City.

☐ **Accept**

☐ **Reject**

75% actual size

Referendum specifications

Referendum question components include borders that separate each question, titles, instructions, the question, and the choices.

1 Border

This border defines the top, left, and bottom sides of the question.

*Top:* 3.0 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of the referendum area.

*Left:* 1.5 pt. line, 100% black.

*Bottom:* 1.5 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of the referendum area; placed 0.2" below last content in referendum area.

2 Referendum title

This header defines each separate referendum question; it begins directly below the top border.

*Fill:* 15% black, extends full width of the referendum area, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

3

Referendum instructions

This area defines each question's instructions; it begins directly below the header.

*Fill:* 10% process cyan, extends full width of the referendum area, 0.2" above topmost ascender, and 0.2" below lowest baseline of type.

*Type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned, set 0.2" from left edge of fill, centered between top and bottom of fill.

4

Referendum content

Presents the referendum question clearly to the voter; it begins 0.2" below bottom of instructions fill, set 0.2" from left border. In a two-column referendum area, space for text should extend to 0.2" from the right edge of the referendum area. In a three-column referendum area, the space for text should extend no wider than 6".

*Content type:* Univers 45 Light, size 14 pt., leading 17 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

5 Referendum selection options

First selection option should begin 0.2" below baseline of content; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater. Subsequent options should begin 0.2" below final line of previous option. Options should be set as close as possible to the selection location, ideally in the left-most column of the referendum area.

*Option type:* Univers 65 Bold, size 14 pt., leading 16 pt., tracking -20, 100% black, left aligned.

6 Separation line

Each selection option should be followed by a line to clearly define it, even if it is the final option in a particular question. Line should be placed 0.2" below baseline of selection option; on ballots with set selection locations, the distance may need to be greater. Line should also be located 0.2" above top of following option, if applicable.

*Line:* 0.375 pt. line, 100% black, extends full width of referendum area allowed for selection options.

Discussion

A primary voter criticism of ballots is the length and complexity of referendum questions. It is imperative that these questions be written in the simplest language possible. Many jurisdictions also provide summaries.

The typesetting of the referendum text is critical. Too many or too few characters per line inhibit legibility and comprehension. The goal should be 40–60 characters per line. Research indicates that many users find line lengths of more than 60 characters or less than 20 characters hard to read.

There is a direct relationship between type size and line spacing (leading). Lines of type that are too close together or too far apart inhibit legibility and comprehension. Referendum content in these best practices is set at 14 points, with 3 points of leading.

## Samples

The design best practices detailed in the previous section are applied to a two-color full-face DRE ballot and a one-color full-face DRE ballot on pages XXX–XXX.

For the one-color version, specifications that vary from those outlined in the Design section are detailed opposite the example.

The ballot content used in these samples was originally developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to illustrate a “moderately complex” ballot. Although it is impossible to cover every ballot scenario, most general election ballot layout issues can be addressed using this content.

The samples shown on the following pages are not endorsements of a particular ballot manufacturer. They are used to illustrate design standards and usability findings.

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15% actual size

for additional production specifications.

**Cast Vote Button**

 Make sure you are finished voting before you press the Cast Vote Button





**One-color version specifications**

If circumstances dictate that ballots be printed in only one color, certain adjustments should be made to the specifications.

**1 Instruction title**

Rather than process cyan, this title should be 100% black.

**2 Instructional fills**

For all background fills, change from process cyan to 10% black. This includes the fills used with all ballot instructions, all question instructions, and all navigational instructions.

**3 Alert and navigation icons**

For all background fills, change from process cyan to 10% black. This includes the fills used with all ballot instructions, all question instructions, and all navigational instructions.

**4 Question titles**

To create appropriate contrast from question instructions, all question header fills should be 20% black rather than the 15% used on two-color ballots.

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